



February 7, 2022

2022 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SB378: Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland -
Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission

BILL: SB378: Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation
POSITION: Testimony of Support of Senate Bill 378
BILL ANALYSIS: Passing the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission; Requiring the Governor to appropriate \$900,000 to the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland from the Cigarette Restitution Fund in fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter; and requiring the funds appropriated under the Act to be used for the purpose of funding the activities of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission.

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council urges you to **SUPPORT** SB378 and the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), which will enhance the food system throughout Maryland. SMADC is a key food system resource provider and partner, not only in Southern Maryland, but across the state for farmers and producers who want to connect with new customers and market opportunities, and for consumers who want to connect with local farms and food. SMADC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that receives funding from the state of Maryland, but the 2020 statewide budget resulted in a 25% reduction in SMADC's overall budget. This has far-reaching implications, especially for the Maryland Market Money (MMM) program, which is run jointly by SMADC and the Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation.

Maryland Market Money provides a dollar-for-dollar match for purchases made using federal nutrition benefits at Maryland farmers markets, including nine access points in Montgomery County. This helps remove economic barriers for food-insecure Marylanders to access nutrient-rich foods and bolsters revenues for local farmers. Since its establishment in 2013, MMM has helped thousands of Marylanders who participate in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, eWIC, and SNAP to purchase locally grown produce, distributing over \$900,000.¹ They have recently started an E-Incentive pilot in partnership with two farmers markets in Montgomery County, and are providing critical leadership in shifting participating farmers markets and farmstands towards electronic benefits. MMM promotes a circular economy where more dollars are invested in the local economy to expand opportunities for small business growth and job creation.

For these reasons the Montgomery County Food Council is FOR HB0147 and urges a favorable report FOR this bill.

The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources.

For more information, please contact: Heather Bruskin, MCFC Executive Director at the email and phone number below.

¹ Maryland Market Money, 2020. "Maryland Market Money 2020 Annual Report."

